

R. H. Smith

*That GOD alone is the Searcher of
Hearts, prov'd, and applied,*

IN A
SERMON

PREACH'D at the
ASSIZES
HELD AT
WINCHESTER
JULY 7, 1719.

By SAMUEL SMITH, A. M.

Publisch'd at the Request of the GRAND JURY.

L O N D O N,
Printed for JAMES KNAPTON, at the *Crown*
in St. Paul's Church-Yard. 1719.

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T O
JOSEPH HINXMAN Esq;
HIGH-SHERIFF,
 A N D
 The Gentlemen of the **GRAND JURY**
 O F T H E
 COUNTY of SOUTH-HAMPTON.

<i>The Right Honourable Lord</i>	William Evelyn Esq;
William Powlett	Ellis St. John Esq;
<i>The Hon. Rob. Herbert Esq;</i>	Walter Godfrey Esq;
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This S E R M O N is with all Humility
 D E D I C A T E D by me

Samuel Smith.

T O
 JOSEPH HINKMAN Esq.
 HIGH-SHERIFF
 AND
 The Gentlemen of the GRAND JURY
 OF THE
 COUNTY of SOUTH-WHAMPTON.



The Right Honourable William Fowler	The Right Honourable John A. John
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This SERMON is with all Humility
 DEDICATED by me

Samuel Smith.



I KINGS viii. 39.

—Thou, even thou only knowest
the Hearts of all the Children
of Men.



WHEN Solomon had finished the Temple at Jerusalem, he assembled the Elders, and the Heads of all the Tribes of Israel to keep a Solemn Festival, and dedicate that noble Structure to the Service of the living God: And in the Solemnity of the Consecration the King himself bore the greatest Share; For he sacrific'd before the Ark, He bless'd the People with his Hands lifted up to Heaven, and besought the Lord with a profound Humility, and a most reverential Behaviour, to accept of this Temple for his Worship; saying, *Behold! the Heaven and Heaven of v. 27, &c. Heavens cannot contain thee, how much less*

L

B

this

this House that I have builded ! Yet have
 thou respect unto the Prayer of thy Servant,
 and to his Supplication, O Lord my God ! to
 bearken unto the Prayer, which thy Servant
 prayeth before thee to Day, that thine Eyes
 may be ever open toward this House, even
 toward the Place of which thou hast said,
 My Name shall be there ; and bearken thou
 to the Supplication of thy Servant, and of all
 thy People Israel, and hear thou in Heaven
 thy Dwelling-place, and when thou bearest
 forgive. And then he goes on to desire of
 God that he would be pleas'd to listen to
 the Prayers that his People should make
 upon some special Occasions, as in Time of
 War for Success against their Enemies, for
 Rain in the Time of Drought, and for De-
 liverance from Famine, from the Pestilence,
 and Locust ; that he would hear them when
 they were afflicted with any of these Calami-
 ties ; and that at all other Times what Prayer
 and Supplication soever should be made by any
 Man, or by all his People Israel, he would hear
 them in Heaven his Dwelling-place, and for-
 give, and do, and give to every Man ac-
 cording to his Ways, whose Heart he knew ;
 for He, even He only knew the Hearts of all
 the Children of Men.

Which Words containing as well an Af-
 firmative Proposition, that

God

God does know the Hearts of all Men,

As a Negative one, that

The Hearts of all Men are not known to any other Being besides him, I shall first offer an Argument or two for the Confirmation of the Truth of each of these Propositions, and then make some suitable Reflections upon them both.

1. The Eleven Apostles, when they prayed that God would shew them whom he had chosen in the Room of the Traytor Judas, began with, *Thou, Lord, which knowest the Hearts of all Men*—And in other Places of Scripture we are told that *He knows the things that come into the Mind every one of them*; that *no Thought can be with-holden from him*; that *he searches the Heart and tries the Reins, even to give every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings*. This is indeed a most important Truth that ought to be well implanted in the Mind, as being the main Ground and Foundation of Religion, and for that Reason it is frequently inculcated in Holy Writ.

The Light of Nature discovers the same: From thence the Heathens had it, and from thence we may demonstrate, that, *to know the Heart* is one of the Attributes of God: who, because he is self-existent, is therefore infinite, and omnipresent, not confin'd

to a Place, nor inclos'd within any Bounds, or Limits, how wide soever; But as the *Wisd. 1. 7.* Author of the Book of *Wisdom* speaks, *the Spirit of the Lord filleth the World; if we climb up into Heaven he is there, if we go down to Hell he is there also; there is no going from his Spirit, no flying from his Presence.* He comprehends all Things perfectly in himself, and is at all Times equally present both in his simple Essence, and by the immediate and perfect Exercise of all his Attributes, to every Part and Angle of the Universe, as if the Whole were but one single Point. From whence it follows that nothing is hid from him; for he is every where, even in the inmost Recesses of our Hearts, and therefore knows every Thing, even the most private Wishes, the most secret Intentions and Designs of all the Men in the World. Were we surrounded with the thickest Darkness, were the Rocks and the Mountains to cover us, yet *Heb. 4. 13.* should we still be *naked and open to the Eyes of him with whom we have to do; still would he see all that passes within our Breasts, and be as thoroughly acquainted with all the intricate Workings of our Thoughts as our own Souls.* For nothing can separate us from him. He is present in all Places, and must therefore know all Things, and the Hearts of all Men.

Which

Which Knowledge is necessary in order to the Judgment of the World: All Men shall be judg'd, not only for their Words and Actions, but the very Thoughts of their Hearts, whether they have been good, or whether they have been evil; and therefore it is as certain that God has a continual Inspection into the Hearts of all Men, and a perfect Cognizance of them, as it is that he governs and will judge the World.

Further, He is the Author of our Beings, he furnish'd our Mind with all its Faculties, and in him we live and exercise them; and may we not then say with David, *He that* Psalm 94. *made the Ear, shall he not hear? He that* 9. &c. *made the Eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth Man Knowledge, shall he not know? And he that fram'd the Intellect, shall not he discern all the several Operations of it.*

So that if we consider God either as our Creator, or as our Judge, we must be convinc'd that it is impossible to do any thing besides his Privy, or to conceal any of our Devices and Imaginations from him. We are his *Creatures*, and we must always be in the *Sight*, and under the *Observation* of our *Creator*. Indeed Men do often act as if they were not, but then their Conscience finds a Time to tell them *with Terror* that they are. I come now to the second Proposition, *viz.* That,

2. No

2. *No other Being doth know the Hearts of all Men.* As the *Omnipresence* of God is a certain Proof that he does *know the Hearts of all Men*, so the *Finiteness* of all other Beings is as certain a Proof that they *do not*; for none of them can *be every where* in the same Point of Time as he is, therefore neither can they *know every thing* as he does, but as their Presence is limited, so is their Knowledge.

Besides this, the Heart of Man is so unsearchable, and it is so far beyond the Reach of any created Being to discern the Secrets of *all Men*, that neither Men, nor Angels, nor Devils, can fully and certainly know the Heart of any *one individual* Person, how near soever they may be to him.

The Ways that one Man has of coming at the Thoughts of another are uncertain and fallacious. Words may be false, and Looks dissembling, and yet we may think them real and unfeign'd; and when they are so, we may then distrust them as un sincere and counterfeit; and so we may live *Years* together with a Man, and yet never *once* be able to dive into his *Heart*. There is nothing to be gather'd out of the *Reserv'd* and *Silent*, and we are not sure that the most *familiar Discourse* will let us into the *true* Sentiments of the *Free* and *Conversable*. When the Mind is in a violent Agitation,

tation, struck with a sudden Surprise of Grief or Joy, and toss'd with a Storm of Passion, the Aspect gives Notice of it to the Beholders, and an inward Commotion is visible in the outward Features. But then what is the true Cause of this Disorder, and what Reflections the Mind makes upon it when all is calm, and the Transport is over, and what the Thoughts are when they are smooth, and the Ruffle ceases, will still be a Secret. Should my Friend communicate to me all that he knows, unbosom himself, and tell me the very Secrets of his Soul, I ought to *believe*, because he is my *Friend*, that he makes a thorough Discovery, and a faithful Representation of his inward State; but whether he does or not, is more than I can *know*, for he cannot *shew* me his *Heart*, and therefore I can have no *infallible Certainty* whether the Account he gives me of it be entirely consonant to it, I cannot be assur'd whether he does not *conceal* some Particulars from me, and *prevaricate* in others; all the Information I can receive is from his Words, and other outward Signs, which he frames as he pleases, and if he has a mind to impose upon my Credulity, he may, and I cannot with all my Penetration find whether he deceives me or not; but nothing can be hid from God, there is no *equivocating* with him; my *Friend* may
deal

deal deceitfully with me, and I may not apprehend it, but he cannot do so with the *Searcher of Hearts*, who has an absolute and an intimate Knowledge of all his Passions and Affections, of all his Motives to Action, his Meditations with himself, his Opinions of Things and Persons, his Desires, his Designs, and his Deliberations upon them, all which taken together are usually in Scripture Language expressed by one Word, *the Heart*. Now *this* Knowledge of the Heart is peculiar to the Maker of it, and is not to be attain'd by Man, or any other Creature, of what Rank soever.

Good and bad Angels may know more of it than we do ; but all the Knowledge they have of it must be gather'd from Effects, as ours likewise is, and as they exceed us in the Quickness of their Apprehensions, and the Accuracy of their Observations, so likewise do they in their *Conjectures* at the Secrets of the Heart. But they cannot *look into the Heart it self*—that the Devil cannot, is prov'd from the many unsuccessful Attempts which he makes to corrupt the Heart of the Righteous : And from hence it follows that the Angels of Light cannot, because the Devils still retain the same intellectual Perfections they had before the Fall.

Having

Having said thus much towards a Proof of the two Propositions, I shall now make such Reflections upon each of them as may conduce to the leading of an upright and holy Life.

When I consider the first of them, *viz.* that

God knoweth the Hearts of all Men, I find.

1st. An unspeakable Comfort arising to them whom I have often pitied; I mean innocent Persons when Men speak ill of them, and asperse them without a Cause.

2^{dly}. I find here the greatest Preservative against vain and evil Thoughts that can be imagin'd.

3^{dly}. I see here the egregious Folly of all Falsehood and Dissimulation.

4^{thly}. I cannot but observe from hence how necessary Religion, and especially this vital Part of it, *the Belief of God's Omniscience*, is to the Good of Human Society. And,

1st. An innocent Person when he is injur'd in his Reputation, may comfort himself with this Reflection, that *God knows his Heart*, and therefore knows that he is free from the Crimes that are imputed to him; for tho' he is now defam'd, and pictur'd in odious Colours, yet the Time will come when the great Judge of the
C World

World shall disclose the Secrets of all Hearts, and then his Innocence will appear, and all the Spots that Malice, Ill-nature or Indiscretion have ever cast upon it, will be wip'd off. Let him then support himself with this Consideration, and let him not lose his Patience when he is persecuted with spiteful Scandals, nor suffer his Spirits to be dejected when he is oppress'd with a Load of Infamy: What if grievous Things be laid to his Charge, and there happen to be some unlucky Incidents, which (being artfully manag'd by the subtil Contrivance of his Enemies) hinder him from clearing himself to the World, so that he is brought into a general Disesteem, and passes for one of the worst of Men? Yet has he not a Conscience, has he not the Discerner of his Conscience to bear him Witness of his Integrity, and have not the Eyes of the supream Ruler of the World beheld his Righteousness? Why then should he be shaken at the Breath of the People, or cast down at the Hatred of Men? Tho' here he be condemn'd and branded with the foulest Characters, yet there is a Court that will finally acquit him, and then all good Men will be sorry that they ever had an ill Opinion of him, and those who wrong'd him knowingly will be cloth'd with Shame and Confusion of Face.

2dly, The

2dly, The Consideration, that *God knows our Hearts, is the only Preservative against evil Thoughts*, which we have all the more occasion for, because the Mind being out of the View of Men, we are apt to take the greater Liberty, and freely think of those Things, which we should be either asham'd or afraid to do in the Presence of a Man, or even to confess that they were ever so much as once in our Thoughts. We know that Men cannot *pry* into our Hearts, or *intrude* upon the *Privacy of our Souls*, and this makes us fancy our selves *secure*, whilst we are guilty only in *Thought* of the most ridiculous Follies and the most scandalous Vices. But if we would but consider that the *all-observing Eye* of Omnipotence is incessantly upon us, and sees every Thought of our Hearts, and that nothing shall be hid which shall not be laid open to all Men that ever have been, are, or shall be in the World, when God comes to sit in Judgment upon them all, if we would but consider *this*, we should certainly keep a stricter Guard upon our Thoughts, and *stand in awe*, and *sin not*, and should be as careful to compose our Minds, and as watchful over our Thoughts, to restrain them from every thing that is indecent, immoral or profane, as we should be to frame our Words, and observe a just and regular De-

portment in all our Actions and Gestures, if we were in the Presence-Chamber of a Sovereign Prince, or before the most august Assembly upon Earth. For we have infinitely more to hope from the Favour, and infinitely more to dread from the Displeasure of God than of any Mortal whatsoever; and why then should we blush to commit the least unseemly thing in the Presence of a Mortal, and yet boldly venture to commit a thousand gross Enormities before that *high and holy One who inhabiteth Eternity*, and whose Glories fill both the Heavens and the Earth? This proceeds from our not considering God as always present with us: The Presence of a *Man* restrains us from Sin, because we *see* him, but the Presence of God has not the same Effect, because we *see* him *not*; and this occasions us to take as much Liberty, and to be altogether as careless and negligent as if we were really out of *his Sight*, as he is out of *ours*. But this fatal Miscarriage might be entirely prevented by Consideration; for being assur'd by Scripture, and convinc'd by Reason, that God is present with us at all Times, and in all Places, we can no more doubt of it than if he was visible to our Eyes; and therefore all we are wanting in, is only *actually to consider of what we assuredly know*. If we did *this*, and always

ways kept a lively Sense of the *Divine Presence*, it would be happy for us; for if we reflected upon an all-wise and powerful Being, our Creator, our Preserver, and our Judge, as looking down upon us, and observing all our Thoughts, we should find this would be a mighty Check to the very first Motions of Sin, able to curb it as soon as it is conceiv'd in the Heart, before it breaks out either into Words or Actions; this would most of all deter us from Evil, enliven our fainting Resolutions, give new Strength to languishing Virtue, support us in the Times of Difficulty, be the strongest Antidote against Temptations, and the greatest Encouragement to persevere in a constant Course of Goodness; so general and efficacious an Influence would this one Reflection have upon our whole Lives; therefore let us endeavour to set God always before us; let not the Hurry of Business, the Allurements of Pleasures, the Variety of outward Objects, divert our Thoughts from this Contemplation, but let us make it habitual to us; especially whenever we come to *swear by his Name*, invoking him as a Witness of the Truth of what we depose, as oft as ever we *call upon his Name in Prayer*, let both these Acts of Worship be constantly preceded by a Pause of Recollection, *that God is present with us*, and this will
surely

surely make us tremble at the Thought of Perjury, and be the most effectual Means to make us serious, humble and reverent, and to keep us from vain and wandring Fancies, and our Prayer from going out of feigned Lips.

3dly, When I consider that God knows the Hearts of all Men, *I see the egregious Folly of Falsehood and Dissimulation*: For should we not judge that Man to be foolish and irrational, who should take a great deal of Pains to conceal his Faults from one, who had no Authority over him to punish him for his bad Deeds, or reward him for his good ones, and yet at the same time should suffer his most flagrant Crimes to be known to another, of whom he stood most in fear, who could impoverish or enrich, debase or promote, and give him either Life or Death, according as he deserved? Should we not take such an one to be out of his Senses? — Well then may we call the Dissembler's Wisdom in question, who runs into the same unaccountable Practice, and is extremely careful to appear fair and honest to Men who have little or no Power over him, and are no ways to be regarded in Comparison to the Almighty God, and yet is conscious that all his Insincerity, that all his Falsehood, which he so studiously endeavours to hide from the World, and all
the

the Rottenness of his Heart, is expos'd in its full Deformity to him who is the Judge of the Heart, who sees a Pharisee thro' all his artificial Disguises, discerns an Enemy under the Mask of a Friend, and a Traitor under that of a Patriot, a lewd Inclination under a sanctified Look, and a Devil in the Shape of an Angel of Light, and will recompence Men not according to Appearances, but Realities; and for that end *tries the Heart and searches the Reins, that he may render to every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings*; there is no playing the Hypocrite with him, and to deceive any one else will signify nothing to us, for he is our Judge, and from him we must look for any real Losses and Advantages, and from no one else.

4thly, I cannot but observe how necessary Religion, and especially this vital Principle of it, the Belief of God's Omniscience, and that he is the Searcher of Hearts, is to the Good of Human Society. Many and great are the Mischiefs that arise from Falsehood and Diffimulation, and there is no way to prevent them by Human Laws, for since the *Eye of Man* cannot discern, nor bear Witness of the Occurrences that are there, 'tis impossible that all the *Laws which the Wit of Men* can devise should ever make
Men

*Men sincere, that can only be effected by a Principle of Religion, a firm Belief that God knows the Heart, and observes all that passes in it, in order to a future Judgment, and if this is once well settled and rooted in the Minds of Men, they have then the greatest Motive that can be to deal truly and sincerely, and the greatest Discouragement that can be to play the Hypocrite, tho' Hypocrisy would be never so gainful to them, for no Gains can compensate the Loss of one's Soul; and if our Hearts are false and hollow, such will they appear, in spite of all our Subtilty, to the Searcher of them, and then no Tricks, no Fetches will bring us off at the last, nor elude the Sentence of that all-knowing and impartial Judge. How happy would it be for the World if all Men did but firmly believe and well consider this? There would then be no Professions of Kindness and Friendship in the *Mouth*, whilst there was Malice and Enmity in the *Heart*; there would then be no making of *false Promises*, nor taking of *false Oaths*, nor giving of *false Evidence*; there would be no Subornation of Witnesses, nor Corruption in Courts of Judicature, but Men would act with Simplicity and Single-heartedness, and there would be Truth and Reality in all that was said or done, the want of which is the greatest*

greatest Obstruction to Justice, is the Bane of many a righteous Cause, and the Overthrow of many an innocent Person, gives the Guilty to escape without a Sentence of Guiltiness pass'd against him, and Iniquity to prevail and triumph.

When I reflect upon the second Proposition, *viz.* that None but God only can know the Heart of Man, I observe from hence,

1st. That Prayer, as it proceeds from the Heart, can only be fully known, and rightly judg'd of by him, who is the *True Beholder of the Heart*; and therefore ought not to be directed to any Creature, to the Souls of departed Men beatified and made perfect in Heaven, nor to Angels of the highest Order, that are nearest the Throne of our heavenly Father, but to our heavenly Father alone, the One Eternal, All-discerning God. I observe,

2^{dly}. That it is an Injury to our Neighbour, as well as a Presumption against God, for one Man to judge the Heart of another; because in doing that, we do not only make our selves Judges of that which we have no Cognizance of, but invade the Prerogative of God himself.

It do's not belong to one Man to judge the Heart of another, because this is beyond his Reach and Capacity. We ought to go

no farther in this than a fair Interpretation of Words and Actions will carry us. This is the only Method that we can with Justice and Safety proceed by : And what Man is there of a thousand with whom we are so intimately acquainted, and all whose Steps we have so narrowly observed, as to be able from thence to make a true Judgment of his Heart, according to that large Acceptation of the Word the Scripture uses it in ? To determine of it by the outward Lineaments, by Rumours and uncertain Reports, by broken Sentences and Inuendoes, is as unjust, as it is for a Judge to pronounce a Person guilty, and condemn him without Evidence, barely upon Suspicion, or because he do's not like his Looks, or for some other odd Conceit that he has taken up to his Prejudice. 'Tis possible that we may be in the Right in our Guessees at the Heart of another, and the Sentence we pass upon him may be *just*, and yet we our selves shall be *unjust* in passing it, because we proceed as if we had sufficient Information, when we have not ; and are therefore guilty of a rash and groundless Censure. This is a Fault that we run into when we speak positively of Mens *Intentions* ; for what Ends they do this, or that, and what is the *first Spring* of their Actions. But every Man is ready to resent this as a great Piece of Injustice, and

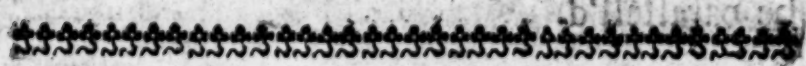
and to demand, Who made you a Judge over me? And if we give our selves leave to answer this Question, we shall find that we act without Commission in all these Proceedings, and usurp the Right and Authority of God himself: For he has reserv'd the Knowledge, and consequently the Judgment of the Heart, to himself alone: And for us to arrogate to our selves what do's incommunicably belong to him, to claim one of his Attributes, and therein to make our selves equal with him, is a daring Piece of Impiety, and such a high Degree of Presumption as is not to be parallell'd.

Judge not therefore that ye be not judged. Let us leave the Hearts of other Men to him who made them, and let every one of us endeavour to purify our own, that when the Secrets of them are disclos'd in the Day that God shall come to judge the World with Thousands of his Angels, it may not be found that we have *fear'd the* Ecclus. 23. *Eyes of Men more than the Eyes of the Lord,* ^{19.} *that are ten thousand times brighter than the Sun.*

Almighty

Almighty God, unto whom all Hearts
be open, all Desires known, and from
whom no Secrets are hid; Cleanse the
Thoughts of our Hearts by the Inspiration
of thy holy Spirit, that we may perfectly
love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy
Name, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

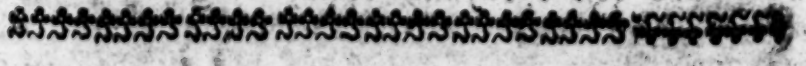
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Almighty

